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ON THE “IMPORTANCE” OF *ILIAD* BOOK 8

ERWIN F. COOK

THE SCENE from *Iliad* Book 8 in which Diomedes rescues a chariot-wrecked Nestor remains one of the most controversial in contemporary Homeric studies. Scholars have often argued that it is modeled on a closely similar scene from the *Aithiopis*; in the belief that the *Aithiopis* is the later poem, many have concluded that the Iliadic scene is interpolated. Underlying such arguments is the further belief that Nestor’s rescue in the *Iliad* is less well integrated into the narrative of Book 8 than its counterpart in the *Aithiopis*; even those who reject the notion that the scene is interpolated tend to concede that it is inadequately motivated.¹ Although I agree that the scene was inspired by the *Aithiopis*, in what follows I hope to show that it is not only well integrated into Book 8, but has also been carefully prepared for in the preceding books and is, moreover, very well motivated in its immediate narrative context. In fact, the entire narrative of Book 8 is structured around a pair of complementary emotional climaxes that this scene serves to introduce and that account for its appropriation from the *Aithiopis*.

Criticism of the scene must be understood in terms of scholarly attitudes toward the book as a whole. Indeed, few books of the *Iliad* have come in for more severe censure than Book 8, or are more routinely ignored in scholarship on the poem.² The roots of this censure and neglect lie in the old

Mark Southern, in memoriam.

I presented earlier versions of this paper at Baylor University, at Brown University, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and at the University of Kansas. I wish to thank those audiences, and in particular Debby Boedeker, Jeff Fish, David Konstan, Stanley Lombardo, René Nünlist, Barry Powell, and Kurt Raaflaub, for the lively and helpful discussions that followed. I would also like to thank Greg Nagy, who generously read the final draft, Ruth Scodel, with whom I exchanged a series of emails on simultaneity in Homer from which I greatly benefited, and the anonymous reviewers of *CP* for their thoughtful comments. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my general indebtedness to Wolfgang Kullmann, who invited me to take part in a yearlong seminar on the transition from orality to literacy (1986–87) at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg, while I was a graduate student. Kelly 2007 and Heitsch 2008 appeared after this article was in press. I have subsequently reviewed Kelly’s monograph, in Cook 2009. All translations are my own.

1. Cf., e.g., Heitsch 2006, 31: “Die vier Stellen [including 8.80ff.], die unter dem Einfluß zweier berühmter Szenen der *Aithiopis* stehen, sind mit ihrem unmittelbaren Kontext so gut wie nicht verbunden.” An important exception is Kelly (2006), who confines himself to specific motifs that have been the targets of Neanalytic approaches to the episode, specifically Odysseus’ retreat and the trace horse (on which, see below). He does not directly address the motivation of the episode as a whole.

2. It is telling that what Reinhardt (1961, 138) pronounced “das unentbehrlichste Buch” of those that fall between Books 1 and 16 is not included in Edwards’ commentaries on selected individual books of the *Iliad* (1987), in Lombardo’s *Essential Iliad* (2000), or in Benner’s Greek selections from the poem (2001). Richards’ earlier digest of the *Iliad*, which has the avowed purpose of removing the “irrelevant incidents and insignificant accretions” (1951, 16) that obscure the plot, reduces Book 8 to four short pages and eliminates the chariot wreck. In this context, see also Postlethwaite’s dismissal of Book 8 in his recent student

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Analysis, which seeks to identify various forms of inconsistency that would in turn betray textual strata belonging to different stages of composition by multiple authors. Although this form of criticism is now generally seen as superannuated, it continues to shape the scholarly *Anschauung* of many contemporary Homerists, including some who consider themselves Oralists. Thus, in the most recent large-scale commentary on the *Iliad*, Geoffrey Kirk censures the book in its entirety on three grounds: the number of plus-verses is abnormally high, as is the number of repeated verses, and “most of its actions and initiatives, whether divine or human, are soon abandoned or reversed.”³ On these grounds, he reaches the remarkable conclusion that “it remains possible that Book 8 (and possibly also 7) was still under refinement at the time of Homer’s retirement or death.”⁴

Of course, Book 8 has also had noteworthy defenders among Unitarian scholars such as Wolfgang Schadewaldt, and more recently Malcom Willcock, whose arguments reflect modern advances in the understanding of the epics as products of oral song culture.⁵ Willcock dismisses the first two arguments on the grounds that, in oral poetry, commonly occurring scenes such as battle narratives are precisely where one should expect to find repeated and interpolated verses. He observes dryly that defeat in battle tends to be accompanied by abrupt changes in plan and strategy and then proceeds to link Kirk’s criticism to an earlier remark by Walter Leaf that he feels has a more interesting refutation:⁶ “The action [of the book] is extremely hurried. The changes of battle succeed each other with astonishing rapidity, and are brought about, not as in other battle-scenes by the victories of heroes, but by a somewhat monotonous interference on the part of Zeus.”⁷ Willcock

commentary (2000, 119): “The book’s function, of describing a particular reversal for a particular purpose, within the broader context of the more general, and much more serious, Achaian defeat, does much to explain its generally unsatisfactory nature.” On the scene of chariot wreck, cf. the recent remarks by Heitsch 2005, 441: “Bedenken richten sich vor allem gegen die kleine Aristie des Diomedes im 8. Buch, von der man den Iliasdichter gerne entlastet sähe”; id. 2006, 25 (cf. also 32): “Hier will offensichtlich ein wenig kompetenter Rhapsode . . . aus dem Aithiopismotiv vom blockierten Kampfwagen eine neue Episode entwickeln, in der Diomedes aus dem Retter in letzter Not zum alleinigen Sieger über die Troer wird. . . . Über die Qualität dieser Episode ist kein Wort zu verlieren. . . .”

3. Kirk 1990, 293.

4. Kirk 1990, 294. Willcock (1995, 115) observes that part of the problem is that Kirk, “like others of the editors of the Cambridge Commentary, appears to have begun from Leaf, as the previous large-scale commentary in English.”

5. Schadewaldt 1966; Willcock 1995.

6. Willcock (1995, 113) paraphrases the section I have placed in italics. I quote the passage in greater detail because I believe Leaf correctly identifies several key interpretive issues that I will address below.

7. Leaf 1900, 331–32. Kirk (1990, ad *Il.* 8.130–32) singles out the passage in which Hektor temporarily withdraws from battle to replace his slain charioteer, after which Homer returns to the advancing Diomedes with the remark that the Trojans would have been penned back in Ilion like lambs had not Zeus “quickly noticed” and hurled a lightning bolt before Diomedes’ horses. Kirk finds this to be “one of the abrupt changes of direction typical of this Book: Diomedes and Nestor are still on the attack, but Hektor has equipped himself with a new charioteer and is presumably ready to renew the combat, no less formidable than before.” I do not address the issue at further length since the explanation seems fairly obvious: Homer implies that Hektor would have been unable to check Diomedes’ advance. It is important to note Homer’s opposed desires to show that Hektor is no match for a number of the Akhaian *promakhoi* (fighters in the front ranks) and to maintain that he is a worthy opponent of Akhilleus, as a consequence of which Homer chooses not to emphasize the former in this pivotal scene (though Diomedes demonstrates as much in a parallel scene from Book 11, on which see below, n. 41).

demonstrates that what Leaf sees as “monotonous interference” in fact corresponds to a well-attested compositional pattern in Homer, in which characters vainly assert themselves against divine will three times before finally being rebuffed: Zeus thus initiates the Akhaian retreat with lightning, warns Diomedes to retreat from battle with another lightning bolt, and then thunders three times from Mount Ida as the retreating Diomedes deliberates turning his chariot to fight Hektor.⁸ The effect aimed for here is, as Willcock observes, amplification, and is anything but monotonous once Homer’s compositional principles are understood.

Willcock goes on to defend the “importance” of Book 8 for the *Iliad* as a whole on two grounds. He begins by agreeing with the Analysts that Book 8 plainly serves to motivate the embassy of Book 9. Since that embassy is now seen as an essential component of the wrath theme, around which the poet has in fact structured the entire epic, this is actually an argument for the *authenticity* of the book. His second point, and one to which we shall return, is that after Zeus’ promise to Thetis in Book 1, his direct intervention on behalf of the Trojans becomes necessary.

Book 8 is thus “important,” even “necessary,” to the *plot*, but, as a scholar such as Kirk would doubtless object, that does not mean the narrative itself is especially well executed. This is, of course, true on the face of it, though once one concedes the book’s importance, and from this affirms that it is an organic component of the poem, it then becomes possible to entertain the notion that any problems lie not with the quality of the narrative, but with our understanding of it. Such is the case, I suggest, with the most severely criticized episode of this much-maligned book: Diomedes’ rescue of Nestor from an advancing Hektor (8.80–171).

Analytic scholars such as Wilamowitz used the episode to support their argument that Book 8 was “late” because it echoes accounts based on the *Aithiopis* in which Nestor again suffers a chariot wreck, and his son, Antilokhos, rescues him at the cost of his own life.⁹ An assumption underlying this argument is that one account is “imitating” the other. The derivative account is inherently “inferior” to its model, and betrays its dependency in part by its aesthetic shortcomings, including its imperfect integration into the narrative. For example, the Neoanalyst Wolfgang Kullmann accepts Analytic claims about the relative priority of the two episodes, though he avoids the Analytic conclusion that the Iliadic passage is interpolated by arguing that the *Aithiopis* is earlier than the *Iliad*:

By comparing Proklos 59 and Pindar, *Pythian* 6.23ff., both of which are based on the *Aithiopis*, one sees that the *Iliad* freely adapts the motif of “Nestor in distress.” In place of the self-sacrifice of Antilokhos, we have here an engagement by Diomedes that remains without further consequence for the narrative. Moreover, the scene in which Odysseus races past him and the story line involving the trace horse remain unmotivated (proving dependence on a source). . . . Paris also strikes a horse belonging to

8. Willcock 1995, 118–20; see also id. 1976, ad *Il.* 8.169–70; 1978, ad *Il.* 8.169–70. Willcock similarly explains two other repeated themes in the book: the resistance of the other gods to the will of Zeus and the death of two of Hektor’s charioteers.

9. Wilamowitz 1884, 372; 1920, 45–46.

Nestor in the *Aithiopsis*. To be sure, no one reports that it was a trace horse, but the situation in the *Aithiopsis* is the only one that plainly requires the trace-horse motif: for only there must someone suffer a chariot accident, but despite this still be able to escape in such a manner that he *can then return without further difficulty on his chariot*. In Book 8, the motif of the trace horse is not exploited, since Nestor does not return on his own chariot, but on that of Diomedes. The death of one of the two yoked horses could have produced nearly the same result.¹⁰

The dependency of the episode on the *Aithiopsis* thus rests, according to Kullmann's analysis, on four principal points: Paris kills one of Nestor's chariot horses with an arrow and Nestor must be rescued from near death as a consequence, Diomedes' actions are without further consequence, and both the trace horse and the flight of Odysseus lack narrative motivation.

Book 8's Unitarian apologists have routinely ignored the episode, or have challenged Analytical claims about the relative priority of the *Iliad* and *Aithiopsis*, but not the aesthetic judgments on which those claims were based. For example, in an extensive critique of Kullmann, Albrecht Dihle simply concedes the artistic inferiority of the Iliadic narrative and instead challenges the Analytical presupposition that a source must be superior to its imitator:

[T]he similarity of motifs between this scene [from the *Aithiopsis*] and *Iliad* 8.80ff.—the rescue of Nestor by Diomedes—[may be] considered certain. To conclude from this, however, that the *Aithiopsis* is prior to the *Iliad* because the episode in the *Aithiopsis* ends in the death of the helper, who is then avenged in the scene that follows by his friend Akhilleus, while the story in *Book 8* has a happy ending and is without particular point, is certainly inadmissible. . . . *No one denies that the rescue of Nestor by his son in the "Aithiopsis" is far more meaningful than in the "Iliad,"* any more than anyone denies the congruence of the particulars of the battle motifs. But there are numerous examples in which later poets sometimes give new point to a traditional motif, and thereby deploy it in altered form and freighted with new significance in their rendition of traditional material.¹¹ . . . *But neither can one deny that the poet of the Antilokhos-aristeia, in*

10. Kullmann 1960, 314–15 (his emphasis): "Durch den Vergleich der Iliasszene mit Proklos 59 und Pi. 6,23ff., die auf die Aithiopsis zurückgehen, ergibt sich, daß die Ilias hier das Motiv des in Not geratenden Nestor in freier Abwandlung benutzt. Statt des Opfertodes des Antilokhos haben wir hier das folgenlos bleibende Eingreifen des Diomedes. Das Vorbeilaufen des Odysseus, und die Beipferdhandlung . . . bleiben dabei unmotiviert (Beweis für Quellenbenutzung). . . . Auch in der Aithiopsis wurde ein Pferd des Nestor von Paris getroffen. . . . Es wird zwar nicht berichtet, daß es ein Beipferd war, aber die Situation der Aithiopassage ist die einzige, die das Beipferdmotiv geradezu fordert: Nur dort muß jemand ein Mißgeschick mit seinem Gespann haben und trotzdem noch daraus so befreit werden, daß er mit dem Gespann müheelos wieder zurückkehren kann. Im Θ wird das Beipferdmotiv nicht ausgenutzt, da Nestor nicht mit seinem eigenen Gespann, sondern mit dem des Diomedes zurückfährt; der Tod eines der beiden Hauptpferde hätte fast denselben Handlungsablauf ergeben können."

Kullmann has repeatedly reaffirmed his position since; see, e.g., 1984, esp. 316–18; 1991, 439–43; 2005; on the motif of the trace horse, see 2005, 24 n. 48: "In VIII 80ff. weiß man überhaupt nicht, warum ein Beipferd getroffen wird: Nestor steigt in Diomedes' Wagen um, die Wagenlenker Nestors bringen dessen Wagen zurück. Aber wie in der *Aithiopsis* ist Paris der Schütze, der das Pferd trifft." Schoeck (1961, 20–31) similarly argues for the priority of the *Aithiopsis* (21–22): "[D]ie Rettung des Vaters durch den Sohn . . . ist umgebogen zu einer beliebigen Hilfeleistung durch Diomedes—es könnte geradesogut ein anderer sein. Schon daraus ergibt sich die Abhängigkeit des Iliasdichters von der Memnonis; es ist klar, daß die Richtung der Beeinflussung nicht von der blassen, unprägnanten Iliasepisode zum Schlüsselmotiv des kyklischen Epos führt." On the singularity of the Iliadic episode, Fenik (1968, 220–21) observes that "nowhere else in the *Iliad* is a man trapped in his chariot and rescued at the last moment from certain death. Another unparalleled detail is Odysseus' refusal to heed Diomedes' call to stop running away and help him protect Nestor."

11. Kelly (2006, 3) also observes that "better motivated" does not necessarily mean "older." With the principle, and as criticism of (Neo)analytic method, I fully agree.

*appropriating the comparatively insignificant motif preserved for us in one version in Book 8 of the “Iliad,” has transformed and dramatically enhanced its value with its application to Antilokhos, Nestor, and Memnon.*¹²

Willcock, it should be observed, does not address the rescue scene in his defense of the “importance” of Book 8, doubtless because he accepts Neo-analytic conclusions about its relationship to the *Aithiopsis* together with their underlying rationale. Thus, in his earlier student commentary on the *Iliad*, Willcock remarks that: “Most recent critics have considered that the *Iliad* version is secondary, a Homeric reflection of the more famous and significant episode.”¹³ The Iliadic episode is less significant than, and consequently posterior to, the episode preserved in the *Aithiopsis*. Nevertheless, Willcock refrains from calling the story an episode *from* the *Aithiopsis* because he believes that the *Iliad* is the earlier poem. His wording thus accommodates the view that the Homeric account echoes an oral tradition that was eventually written down as part of the *Aithiopsis*.¹⁴ This is substantially the view that I take in what follows: references to the *Aithiopsis* should be understood to mean oral traditions contemporary with those of the *Iliad* that included the narrative of Nestor’s chariot wreck.¹⁵ Such episodes could have coexisted for some time in the oral narrative traditions of the *Iliad* and *Aithiopsis*; if so, there is no reason to assume that influence only flowed in one direction.

Kirk is even more critical of the Iliadic scene, but, like Dihle and Willcock, he denies that its alleged shortcomings constitute an argument for the priority of the *Aithiopsis*:

12. Dihle 1970, 11–12 (my emphases): “[D]ie Motivähnlichkeit dieser Szene [from the *Aithiopsis*] mit Θ 80ff., der Errettung Nestors durch Diomedes, [may be] als gesichert gelten. Daraus aber, daß die Episode in der *Aithiopsis* mit dem Tode des Helfers endet, der dann im folgenden von seinem Freunde Achill gerächt wird, während die Geschichte im Θ gut ausgeht und ohne besondere Pointe ist, auf die Priorität der *Aithiopsis* zu schließen, ist sicher unzulässig. . . . Daß die Rettung Nestors durch seinen Sohn im Rahmen der *Aithiopsis* viel bedeutungsvoller ist, bestreitet niemand, ebensowenig, daß die Einzelheiten des Kampfmotives in beiden Fällen übereinstimmen. Aber es gibt doch reichlich Beispiele dafür, daß jeweils spätere Dichter einem traditionellen Motiv neue Pointen abgewinnen und es so in gewandelter Form zu einem neuartigen Bedeutungsträger in ihrer Erzählung eines überkommenen Stoffes machen. . . . Aber ebensowenig läßt sich widerlegen, daß der Dichter der *Antilokhos-Aristie* das vergleichsweise harmlose Motiv, das uns in einer Version im Θ der *Ilias* erhalten ist, mit seiner Übertragung auf *Antilokhos/Nestor/Memnon* abwandelte und dramatisch aufwertete.”

Dihle’s concession about the merits of the Iliadic scene finds a recent echo in Erbse, who likewise argues for its priority to the *Aithiopsis* (1993, 394): “Das nun [Pi. P. 6.23ff.] ist eine dramatisch wirkungsvolle, erschütternde Geschichte, viel ergreifender als das, was in der *Ilias* über das—auf den ersten Blick etwas befremdende—Handeln des Diomedes erzählt wird.”

13. Willcock, 1978, ad *Il.* 8.78–98. With Willcock’s comments compare those of Edwards (1991, 18): “Scholars have argued that other passages in the *Il.* are modelled on episodes in the *Aithiopsis*. Nestor is rescued by Diomedes (8.80–129), but was more appropriately, and more poignantly, saved in the *Aithiopsis* by his son Antilokhos, who in so doing lost his life.”

14. I take this to be the scholarly consensus, although there are exceptions, e.g., Erbse 1993. West (2003) argues that the *Aithiopsis* was modeled on an *Uriliad* composed by Homer that would have included Akhilleus’ death and funeral games. West is followed by Heitsch (2005, 2006), who nevertheless argues that a later, and thoroughly mediocre, poet interpolated the scenes involving chariot wreck in *Iliad* 8 and 16 from the *Aithiopsis*. West’s claims are thoroughly and compellingly rebutted by Kullmann (2005), and those of Heitsch by Kelly (2006, 8–12).

15. Thus also Kullmann 1960, e.g., 4, 12–13, 30; 2005; cf. Willcock 1997, 181. I do not, however, share Willcock’s views on the textualization of the epics, on which see Cook 2004, with further bibliography. Burgess (1995, 1997, 2001, 2005) provides the most thorough and incisive assessment of the uses and limitations of Neoanalysis from an oralist perspective; and for the converse perspective, see also Kullmann 1984.

Neoanalysts have argued . . . that the *Aithiopsis* episode where Nestor's son Antilokhos rescued his father from a similar predicament (also caused when a horse is wounded by an arrow-shot from Paris), at the cost of his own life, is the model from which the present episode is derived. There is no evidence for this rather than other possibilities: that this is the model for the later poem, or more probably—in view of deficiencies in the present account—that both are versions of a lost, typical exemplar.¹⁶

Although he rejects (Neo)analytic conclusions about the relationship between the Iliadic episode and the *Aithiopsis*, Kirk's intertextuality is nevertheless an Analytically inspired source and derivation model based on static texts—exemplars—that somehow stubbornly resist adaptation by a poet trained to compose in performance. Because the later text is imitative, it is more likely to be “deficient”: relative quality is again used to establish relative priority.¹⁷

THE CHARIOT WRECK IN ITS NARRATIVE CONTEXT

With this in mind, I now turn to consideration of the episode and its context, both in Book 8 and in the broader context of Books 1 through 9. It should be admitted at the outset that the actual narrative is for the most part clear and unproblematic: Book 8 comprehends the entire second day of battle, beginning with a divine assembly on Olympos and concluding with a night-time assembly of the Trojans; the Trojan assembly is balanced in turn by one of the Akhaians that frames the embassy to Akhilleus' hut in Book 9. In the divine assembly, Zeus forbids the other gods to interfere in the fighting. Athene responds by pleading to be allowed to advise the Akhaians; Zeus offers his smiling approval, and departs for Ida. He then allows the two armies to fight indecisively till midday, “as groans and boasts of triumph were heard of men killing and being killed, and the earth ran with blood” (8.64–65). At this point, the audience might have fairly expected a *promakhos* to begin an *aristeia* that would turn the tide of battle.¹⁸ Instead, Zeus arbitrarily imposes the outcome by lifting the scales in which he sets the fates of the Trojans and Akhaians. When the fate of the Akhaians sinks to the earth, Zeus thunders and lets fly a blazing flash of lighting among the Akhaians, who are seized with “yellow fear” (77).

The episode between Nestor and Diomedes occurs in this general rout of the Akhaian forces as a consequence of Zeus-inspired panic. We are told that Idomeneus does not endure to remain, nor Agamemnon, nor the two Aiantes; Nestor alone remains, not that he does so willingly, but his trace horse has been stricken by Paris' arrow, and in its death struggle (ἐτείρετο, 81) has

16. Kirk 1990, ad *Il.* 8.78–91.

17. In fact, Kirk's speculations about a common source for the *Aithiopsis* and *Iliad* echo an earlier Unitarian defense of Book 8 by Schadewaldt designed to reconcile the parallel with his belief that the text of the *Aithiopsis* is later than that of the *Iliad* (though Schadewaldt himself later changed his position [1966, 97–98 n. 2]): “Angenommen aber, Homer habe wirklich eine Nestor-Antilochos-Szene umgesetzt, so ist immer noch nicht die Möglichkeit ausgeschlossen, er wie die *Aithiopsis* haben aus einer gemeinsamen älteren Quelle geschöpft.” The desperation of such arguments becomes apparent the moment one tries to imagine a “common source” that does not reduce to mere coincidence the death of a chariot horse belonging to Nestor, from an arrow shot by Paris, the ensuing chariot wreck, and Nestor's rescue, by a young man from an advancing Trojan *promakhos*, in both the *Iliad* and *Aithiopsis*, to say nothing of the inter- and intratextual parallels I consider below.

18. Krischer 1971, 85–86.

thrown the other horses into confusion. The old man races to cut the traces with his sword, but meanwhile the swift horses of Hektor come up through the mayhem bearing their bold charioteer, Hektor.¹⁹

The old man is nearly killed, but Diomedes quickly recognizes (ὄξ' ὅ νόησε, 91) his predicament. He shouts to Odysseus, urging him to offer aid (94–96): “Where are you fleeing with your back turned like a coward [κακὸς ὢς] in the crowd of men? / Look out or someone may fix his spear in your back while you do! / Stay here instead, so we may repulse this wild man from the old one!” But Odysseus does not respond (οὐδ' ἐσάκουσε, 97), and races past them to the ships.

Diomedes, alone though he is, now mingles among the *promakhoi* and, standing before Nestor's chariot, addresses him (102–4): “Old man, now the young fighters wear you down [σε νέοι τείρουσι], / for your strength is undone [βίη λέλυται], and old age is your companion [γῆρας ὁπάζει], / while your squire is weak [ἥπεδανὸς . . . θεράπων] and your horses slow [βραδέες].”²⁰

The opening contrast between Nestor's old age and the youth of his assailants thus continues with a list of further impairments that prepare for a new contrast—between Nestor's slow and Diomedes' swift horses—that leads to Diomedes' invitation to observe his own team in action (105–11):

“ἀλλ' ἄγ' ἐμῶν ὀχέων ἐπιβήσεο, ὄφρα ἴδῃαι	105
οἷοι Τρώιοι ἵπποι, ἐπιστάμενοι πεδίῳ	
κραπινὰ μάλ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα διωκόμεν ἡδὲ φέβεσθαι,	
οὓς ποτ' ἀπ' Αἰνεΐαν ἐλόμην, μήστωρε φόβοιο.	
τούτῳ μὲν θεράποντε κομείτων, τῷδε δὲ νῶϊ	
Τρῶσιν ἐφ' ἵπποδάμοις ἰθύνομεν, ὄφρα καὶ Ἐκτώρ	110
εἴσεται εἰ καὶ ἐμὸν δόρυ μαίνεται ἐν παλάμῃσιν.”	

“But come, mount my chariot, so you may see	105
what the horses of Tros are like, how skilled of the plain	
at pursuing and retreating to and fro with utmost speed,	
twin devisers of rout whom I once took from Aineias.	
To your horses our squires will tend, but these will we	
drive at the horse-taming Trojans, so that even Hektor	110
may know if my spear also rages in my hands.”	

In the event, Sthenelos dismounts, and he and Eurymedon tend Nestor's horses, while Nestor boards Diomedes' chariot, takes the reins, and makes for Hektor.

Diomedes casts at Hektor but kills his squire, Eniopeus, instead. At this, grief (ἄχος) thickens the mind (φρένας) of Hektor, but grieving though he is (ἄχυνόμενός περ) he leaves Eniopeus and sets out to find a new charioteer (124–26). With Hektor temporarily out of the way, Diomedes is on the point of causing the Trojans ruin and irreparable harm, but Zeus quickly recognizes (ὄξ' ὅ νόησε, 132) their predicament and lets fly another lightning

19. De Jong (2004, 72) calls attention to the sinister undertone created by the *polyptoton*.

20. Note that the word ἥπεδανός, literally “unsound of foot,” links Eurymedon to the βραδέες horses somewhat more closely than my translation implies.

bolt that lands before the horses of Diomedes, who take fright and begin to cower.

Nestor likewise takes fright, in his spirit (θυμῷ, 138), and declares (139–42): “Diomedes, come on now, turn your single-hoofed horses in flight [φόβονδε]. / Do you not see how victory from Zeus does not follow you? / For now to this man Zeus gives the glory, / tomorrow in turn he will give it to us as well, if he wishes.”²¹ To this, Diomedes replies (146–50):

“ναὶ δὴ ταῦτά γε πάντα, γέρον, κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες·
ἀλλὰ τόδ’ αἰνὸν ἄχος κραδίην καὶ θυμὸν ἱκάνει·
Ἐκτώρ γάρ ποτε φήσει ἐνὶ Τρώεσσ’ ἀγορεύων·
‘Τυδείδης ὑπ’ ἐμεῖο φοβεύμενος ἵκετο νῆας,’
ὥς ποτ’ ἀπειλήσει· τότε μοι χάνοι εὐρεῖα χθών.” 150

“Yes of course, everything you say, old man, is proper,
but this dread grief [*akhos*] comes upon my heart and spirit,
for some day Hektor will say as he speaks among the Trojans:
‘Tydeus’ son reached the ships in flight, pursued by me.’
Thus will he boast, and then may the wide earth swallow me.”²² 150

Nestor assures him that if Hektor says this, the Trojans will not believe him—especially not the wives whose husbands Diomedes has killed.

Nestor does not force Diomedes to concede the point and agree on retreat, or to make further concessions of any kind, but diplomatically turns the horses back to the ships.²³ Hektor now delivers the boast Diomedes so dreaded (161–66):

“Τυδεῖδη, περὶ μὲν σε τίον Δαναοὶ ταχύπωλοι
ἔδρη τε κρέασίν τε ἰδὲ πλείοις δεπάεσσι·
νῦν δέ σ’ ἀτιμήσουσι· γυναικὸς ἄρ’ ἀντὶ τέτυξο.
ἔρρε, κακὴ γλήνη, ἐπεὶ οὐκ εἴξαντος ἐμεῖο
πύργων ἡμετέρων ἐπιβήσσαι, οὐδὲ γυναικάς
ἄξεις ἐν νήεσσι· πάρος τοι δαίμονα δώσω.” 165

“Son of Tydeus, the swift horsed Danaans used to honor you
above all the rest, with the best seat at table, meat and full cups:
But now, they shall dishonor you, for you are just like a woman.
So run away, cowardly girl, since you shall never mount our walls
while I yield to you, and you will never lead off our women 165
in your ships: before that happens I will give you over to Hades.”

As Kirk observes: “Hektor’s derision must be almost worse than Diomedes had feared.”²⁴ In fact, it is very nearly more than he can bear: in contrast to Hektor, who moments before had retreated to find a new charioteer despite his *akhos*, Diomedes thrice deliberates throughout his mind and spirit (κατὰ

21. Martin (1989, 104) cites this passage in the context of calling attention to Nestor’s use of gnomic devices to soften commands and make them more palatable. For discussion of the passage focusing on Nestor’s use of ἀλκή and κῦδος, which I have rendered with “victory” and “glory” respectively, see Collins 1998, 46–57.

22. On the verb ἀπειλέω and Diomedes’ use of it here, see Adkins 1969, esp. 11.

23. Nestor’s diplomacy here is noted in the ancient scholia.

24. Kirk 1990, ad loc.

φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν, 169) whether to turn back his horses and fight; and Zeus thunders thrice, giving the Trojans a sign of victory in battle.²⁵

The only time that Homer visualizes Diomedes' return to the camp is at the moment he resists doing so: just as Nestor turns the chariot to the camp without forcing Diomedes to agree on retreat, Homer engages in a similar act of narrative tact by never actually describing the flight that Diomedes finds so galling. Instead, we have the excited gloating of Hektor over a victory he has not earned. In addition to everything else that it accomplishes, the scene also exposes Hektor's emotional lability and overconfidence following on his unexpected success in battle, which will ultimately prove his downfall.

Hektor now calls on his men and even his own horses (173–97):

Τρῶες καὶ Λύκιοι καὶ Δάρδανοι ἀγχιμαχηταί,
 ἄνδρες ἔστε, φίλοι, μνήσασθε δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς.
 γινώσκω δ' ὅτι μοι πρόφρων κατένευσε Κρονίων
 νίκην καὶ μέγα κῦδος, ἀτὰρ Δαναοῖσί γε πῆμα·
 νήπιοι, οἳ ἄρα δὴ τάδε τείχεα μηχανόωντο
 ἀβλήχρ' οὐδενόσσωρα· τὰ δ' οὐ μένος ἄμὸν ἐρύξει·
 ἵπποι δὲ ῥέα τάφρον ὑπερθορέονται ὀρυκτὴν.
 ἀλλ' ὅτε κεν δὴ νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῇσι γένωμαι,
 μνημοσύνη τις ἔπειτα πυρὸς δηῖοιο γενέσθω,
 ὥς πυρὶ νῆας ἐνιπρήσω, κτείνω δὲ καὶ αὐτοὺς
 Ἀργεῖους παρὰ νηυσὶν ἀτυζομένους ὑπὸ καπνοῦ.”
 ὧς εἰπὼν ἵπποισιν ἐκέκλετο φώνησέν τε·
 “Ξάνθε τε καὶ σύ, Πόδαργε, καὶ Αἴθων Λάμπε τε δῖε,
 νῦν μοι τὴν κομιδὴν ἀποτίνετον, ἦν μάλα πολλὴν
 Ἀνδρομάχῃ θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος Ἥετιώνοσ
 ὑμῖν πᾶρ προτέροισι μελίφρονα πυρὸν ἔθηκεν
 οἷνόν τ' ἐγκαράσασα πιεῖν, ὅτε θυμὸς ἀνώγοι,
 ἦ ἐμοί, ὅς περ οἱ θαλερὸς πόσις εὐχομαι εἶναι.
 ἀλλ' ἐφομαρτεῖτον καὶ σπεύδετον, ὄφρα λάβωμεν
 ἄσπιδα Νεστορέην, τῆς νῦν κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει
 πᾶσαν χρυσεῖην ἔμεναι, κανόνας τε καὶ αὐτὴν,
 αὐτὰρ ἅπ' ὧμοιν Διομήδεος ἵπποδάμοιο
 δαιδάλεον θώρηκα, τὸν Ἥφαιστος κάμε τεύχων.
 εἰ τούτω κε λάβοιμεν, ἐελποίμην κεν Ἀχαιοὺς
 αὐτονυχὶ νηῶν ἐπιβησέμεν ὠκειάων.

“Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanians who fight at close quarters,
 be men, my friends, and remember your furious valor,
 for I know the son of Kronos has granted me with ready heart
 victory and great glory, but, for the Danaans at least, pain.
 The fools! for these walls they devised are feeble,
 and of no account, and they will not restrain my might,
 but rather our horses will easily leap over the dug-out ditch.
 And at the moment I come upon the hollow ships,
 at that moment be sure to think of destructive fire
 so I may burn their ships with it, and kill their men,

25. In that *akhos* is also attacking Diomedes' *thumos* at this point, I am inclined to see the phrase not as a hendiadys, but as representing the opposing sides of his struggle, that is between reason and emotion.

while the Argives are stricken among the ships with smoke.”

Having said this, he called out to his horses and spoke:

“Xanthos, and you too Podarge, and Aithon and brilliant Lampos, 185
now repay me your tending, which Andromakhe,
daughter of great-hearted Eetion, provided in great abundance,
for she set the honey-hearted wheat before you
and mixed wine for you to drink, whenever your heart commanded,
even before me, the very man who boasts to be her stout husband: 190
so hurry on! pursue them! so we may take
the Nestorean shield, whose fame now reaches heaven,
as being all of gold, both the grips and the shield itself,
and from the shoulders of horse-taming Diomedes
the inlaid corselet, which Hephaistos labored to fashion. 195
If we take these, I would hope that on this very night
the Akhaians will mount their swift ships.”

With this the scene shifts to Olympus and Hera’s unsuccessful attempt to persuade Poseidon to intervene on behalf of the Akhaians.

What, then, are the deficiencies of the episode, in Kirk’s view?

The scene in which Odysseus races on past Diomedes when the latter appeals for help rescuing Nestor is “an apparently pointless little digression.”²⁶

It is also unclear whether the phrase “he did not respond” [οὐδ’ ἐσάκουσε, 97] means that Odysseus did not hear or deliberately ignored Diomedes.²⁷

When Diomedes then races alone to the scene of Nestor’s chariot wreck, he is said to “mingle with the *promakhoi*.” The formula Kirk finds “inappropriate” as there are none, either Trojan or Achaean, at hand.²⁸

Once Diomedes reaches the chariot, “his words to Nestor are relaxed in tone and the sense of crisis has disappeared; indeed he makes no reference to the dead trace-horse and seems to assume that Nestor has simply been delayed through slowness and age.”²⁹

Diomedes illogically replaces his charioteer, Sthenelos, with Nestor: “Sthenelos, himself no mean warrior, is unusually inconspicuous and is now dispatched with the feeble Eurumedon (who is nevertheless ἀγαπήνωρ at 114); he would of course have been more use than Nestor in the venture against Hektor, itself improvised by Diomedes out of an intended rescue; but the whole episode is particularly weak in practical terms.”³⁰

Diomedes then casts at Hektor, but strikes his charioteer instead: “The motif is typical . . . but here and in the repeated version at 311ff. the encounter is interrupted in a special way as Hektor drives off to find a new charioteer. The whole incident appears to be not very precisely visualized.”³¹

Hektor’s mention of the gold shield of Nestor and the divine corselet of Diomedes are products of “rhapsodic interference” with the text: “these unlikely accoutrements are plainly invented to add weight to an erratic occasion.”³²

26. Kirk 1990, ad *Il.* 8.92–98. Note the harsher reformulation of Kullmann’s own arguments, on which see above.

27. *Ibid.*, ad *Il.* 8.97–98.

28. *Ibid.*, ad *Il.* 8.99–100.

29. *Ibid.*, ad *Il.* 8.102–11.

30. *Ibid.*, ad *Il.* 8.109–10.

31. *Ibid.*, ad *Il.* 8.118–23.

32. *Ibid.*, ad *Il.* 8.191–97.

In what follows, I will take the opposite side of Kirk's position on each point, arguing first that Homer prepares for the episode in a manner that is meant to forestall many of his objections. I will then address the related issue of the scene's integration and motivation in both narrative and thematic terms. In doing so, I hope to show further that Homer appropriates the scene of Nestor's chariot wreck as a direct consequence of his decision to dramatize the emotional climax of the narrative by what I have elsewhere termed an "*akhos*-theme."³³ I also hope to show that Homer has been preparing for its deployment from the poem's opening scene.

I begin by returning to the point raised by Willcock, that after Zeus promises Thetis to bring about a defeat of the Akhaian forces, his direct intervention becomes necessary. In fact, Zeus has already intervened: in the opening scene of Book 2, Zeus deliberates how to honor Akhilleus and destroy many men at the ships of the Akhaians. His decision, to send a dream to Agamemnon promising victory in battle, is described as a "plan" (βουλή, 2.5), thus echoing the "plan of Zeus" (Διὸς . . . βουλή, 1.5) that in the proem is linked—somewhat ambiguously—to the plot of the epic.³⁴

The logic behind Zeus' decision in Book 2 is straightforward: the Akhaian forces have been decimated and thoroughly demoralized by plague and the withdrawal of Akhilleus and his Myrmidons. Zeus thus lures Agamemnon into battle in the expectation that the Akhaians will suffer summary defeat without requiring further intervention on his part. The Akhaians, however, refuse to follow the script; contrary to all expectations, they emerge victorious, thanks in large measure to Diomedes, who emerges as a surrogate Akhilleus and embodied genius of Akhaian victory in battle.³⁵ This requires a second intervention by Zeus, in Book 8, that the success of the Akhaians on the first day of fighting also serves to color.³⁶ Stated from a different angle, the calculus behind Agamemnon's slight of Akhilleus in Book 1 was basically correct: he erred solely in failing to take into account Akhilleus' influence with the gods, as revealed by this very scene.

The scale of the narrative describing the first day of fighting, in Books 2 through 7, stands in pointed contrast to that of the second day, which comprises a single book. This contrast gives Book 8 a truncated feel that earned it the title of *kolos makhe* in antiquity. In other words, by devoting a full six books to the first day of fighting in which the Akhaians dominate the battlefield, Homer not only magnifies the Akhaians, but correspondingly diminishes the Trojans, whose victory he then narrates in a relatively perfunctory manner.

33. Cook 2003.

34. Marks 2001, 2002.

35. As is well recognized. See, e.g., Owen 1947, 47; Whitman 1958, 167; Schoeck 1961, 75–80; Redfield 1975, 3; Kullmann 1984, 314–15; Edwards 1987, 198; Beye 1993, esp. 139–40; Burgess 1995, 239–40 and 2006, 157, 160; Rabel 1997, 90; Alden 2000, 169–75; and below, n. 72.

36. This has important implications for the relationship between the *Dios boule* and the plot of the *Iliad*, since a full six books, comprising approximately one fourth of the poem, depart from Zeus' plan. From this, and a similar derailment of the *boule* in Book 13, it emerges that the *Dios boule* represents the general plot of the poem, but that the narrative can also depart from it significantly and for long stretches. The plot also corresponds to *moira*, which can be seen as a metaphor for Homer's inherited tradition, though passages such as the Akhaian triumph in battle *huper aisan*, or Hera's imposition of sunset against the will of Helios, can also be understood as asserting the authority of the tradition over "Fate" herself.

The smaller dimensions of the narrative and its chaotic structure do not betray incompetence, haste, or lack of polish, they are *the point*.

The failure of the first plan of Zeus, which relied on natural causes to secure Akhaian defeat, together with Homer's subsequent magnification of their success on the first day of fighting, emphasizes the sheer arbitrariness of their defeat on the second day, and further diminishes the Trojans: *only* the direct intervention of Zeus could account for a Trojan victory in battle. This is underscored by the fact that elsewhere reversals in battle are caused by the wounding of a major character: in the present case, neither Hektor, nor indeed any Trojan, is described killing a single Akhaian warrior. Hektor thus celebrates a victory but is denied the *aristeia* that would normally precede and be prerequisite to that victory.³⁷ In fact, as we shall see, the entire narrative of Book 8 is designed to produce a sense of indignant outrage in the audience, a feeling that "this should not be happening! The Akhaians *should* be winning!"

THE SCENE IN WHICH ODYSSEUS RACES PAST DIOMEDES IN RETREAT

Let us now turn to the narrative of Nestor's chariot wreck. Kirk himself calls attention to what I see as the central issue at stake: narrative motivation. But first I want to consider the other features of the episode that Kirk criticizes, beginning with the "apparently pointless little digression" in which Diomedes accosts the retreating Odysseus.

Adrian Kelly notes the consistent pairing of Diomedes and Odysseus in the epic tradition, from which he concludes: "For an audience attuned to the relationship between these two characters, the isolation of Diomedes [in Book 8] is all the more apparent for the absence of someone with whom he so often acts in concert."³⁸ His claim finds textual support in the scene immediately preceding, in which Homer recounts the retreat of Idomeneus, Agamemnon, and the Aiantes. This is followed by mention of Nestor's own predicament, which it serves to introduce by way of an explicit contrast that underlines the old man's isolation. It would thus be wrong to object that the catalog of retreating heroes—which Odysseus in fact continues—already serves to dramatize the isolation of both Nestor and Diomedes. Rather, the contrast between the other leaders and the stranded Nestor is echoed, and further reinforced, by a second contrast between a retreating Odysseus and Diomedes who remains voluntarily. Nevertheless, if this were the complete explanation, then Odysseus is here little more than a tool of dramatic emphasis, wholly subordinated to the characterization of Diomedes. I suggest

37. Krischer 1971, 87.

38. Kelly 2006, 6. Kullmann (1960, 31–32) uses similar logic to explain the function of an allegedly parallel scene from the *Aithiopis* in which Antilokhos cries out for assistance. In the present context, note that the pairing of Diomedes and Odysseus in the tradition echoes the—often antagonistic—pairing of *bie* and *metis* in both epics. In this scene, however, Diomedes finds himself already paired with another character of *metis*, Nestor, rendering Odysseus' presence thematically redundant (on Nestor's role, see below). The groundbreaking study of the *bie-metis* polarity in Homer is by Nagy (1999, esp. 45–49); on the *Iliad*, see also Wilson 1999, 2002; on the *Odyssey*, see Cook 1995; and on the polarity as a locus of intertextual polemic between the two epics, see Wilson 2005.

that, in keeping with the narrative economy that typifies Homeric epic, the scene serves to characterize Odysseus as well.

The scene finds an important echo in the so-called *epipoleis* from Book 4, in which Agamemnon reviews the troops: his review reproduces the order in which the Akhaian leaders are mentioned retreating in Book 8, with the “insertion” of Agamemnon after Idomeneus. In fact, the case can be made that an important function of the *epipoleis* is to prepare for the events of Book 8. After praising Idomeneus, the Aiantes, and Nestor, Agamemnon next comes upon Odysseus and then Diomedes, both of whom he rebukes for failing to arm for battle. Odysseus responds angrily (4.351–55):

“πῶς δὴ φῆς πολέμοιο μεθιέμεν, ὀππότε Ἀχαιοὶ
 Τρωσὶν ἐφ’ ἵπποδάμοισιν ἐγείρομεν ὄζυν Ἄρηα;
 ὄψεαι, ἦν ἐθέλῃσθα καὶ αἱ κέν τοι τὰ μεμήλη,
 Τηλεμάχιο φίλον πατέρα προμάχοισι μιγέντα
 Τρώων ἵπποδάμων· σὺ δὲ ταῦτ’ ἀνεμώλια βάζεις.”

“How can you say we are lax in war, when we Akhaians
 rouse sharp Ares against the horse-taming Trojans?
 You will see, if you wish and these things are a concern of yours,
 the loving father of Telemakhos mingling among the *promakhoi*
 of the horse-taming Trojans. What you are saying is nonsense.”

Although it is possible to detect a note of humor in the fact that after this outburst we now see Odysseus racing to the ships in retreat, his presence in the company of Idomeneus, Agamemnon, and the Aiantes tacitly reveals that he has indeed been fighting among the *promakhoi* in Book 8.³⁹ In fact, he is the last among them to retreat!

It is also important to notice in evaluating Odysseus’ actions that Diomedes’ address could have been repeated verbatim to any other Akhaian *promakhos* (8.94): “Where are you fleeing with your back turned like a coward [κακὸς ὥς] in the crowd of men?” Diomedes, of course, had seen the thunderbolt of Zeus and the retreat of the other *promakhoi* along with everyone else; but even so, Odysseus’ actions would have *appeared* to the internal characters very much as he describes them. The point, then, is not that Diomedes accuses Odysseus of actual cowardice, but rather that he exploits the ambiguous appearance of Odysseus’ actions to goad him to remain and fight. To do so, Diomedes uses that most potent of psychological motivators in Homer, a hero’s sense of honor and shame, the same emotions that will presently cause Diomedes himself to resist fleeing from Hektor.

This brings us to the equally ambiguous expression οὐδ’ ἐσάκουσε (97), which the narrator applies to Odysseus in his own voice. Since antiquity, scholars have debated whether the verb means that Odysseus did not hear or simply ignored Diomedes—the term is a Homeric *hapax*—although there is general agreement that both interpretations are possible. I suggest that these interpretations of what Homer “meant” should not be viewed as exclusive,

39. The humor is noted by Willcock (1997, 180), though he does not remark the contrast with Book 4 that helps reinforce it.

but rather that his wording reflects the ambiguous appearance of Odysseus' actions. In narratological terms, Homer continues to focalize those actions through Diomedes' eyes after Diomedes has completed his own account of them.⁴⁰ Homer thus uses a verb that could be understood equally as confirming Diomedes' charge of cowardice and as reflecting his awareness that Odysseus is no coward and simply had not heard him. Diomedes also uses an ambiguous term *κακὸς ὥς* (94) in making his charge: the phrase could imply that Odysseus is playing the coward, or merely that he resembles one. The multiple ambiguities found in this scene are thus thematically coherent and moreover entirely appropriate to the character of Odysseus, a man famous for deceptive appearances.⁴¹

THE SCENE AT NESTOR'S CHARIOT

Kirk next argues that Diomedes is incorrectly described as "mingling among the *promakhoi*," that when Diomedes addresses Nestor he does not seem to notice Nestor's trace horse has been killed, and that the sense of urgency has vanished and they converse in a "relaxed" tone.⁴² To begin with the last issue, it is important to note that the actions of Diomedes and Nestor form the primary narrative, and those of Hektor a secondary, parallel one. It is, in fact, a well-known feature of Homeric composition that when the scene shifts between two narrative threads, the narrative that falls out of focus

40. On embedded focalization in the *Iliad*, see De Jong 2004, 101–48. I recognize that a conservative narratologist may be troubled at the lack of a semantic marker to indicate that Homer continues focalizing the scene through Diomedes' eyes, though I do not find it difficult to imagine a gestural or tonal marker in performance, and how the scene is focalized ultimately does not affect my larger findings.

41. Note that Homer pointedly exonerates Odysseus of the charge of cowardice in the closely parallel scene from Book 11 of the *Iliad* that also serves to vindicate Diomedes: in that book, Zeus again takes his seat on Mount Ida and sends Iris to promise victory to Hektor (11.200–209). Once Hektor sees Agamemnon retire wounded from battle, he will have the upper hand, free to kill until he reaches the ships and darkness falls. As in Book 8, Zeus is cast as the author of Akhaian defeat, and Hektor will once more lead the Trojans until they reach the Akhaian ships and set one ablaze. When Hektor begins the charge, Odysseus calls out to Diomedes for help "since it would be a disgrace / if Hektor should take the ships" (314–15). Unlike Odysseus, Diomedes responds to the appeal, and they launch an immediate counteroffensive, as Diomedes and Nestor had done in Book 8. Nevertheless, Diomedes denies they will be successful "since cloud-gathering Zeus / obviously prefers to give the upper hand to the Trojans rather than to us" (318–19). After they both kill a number of Trojans, Hektor "quickly recognizes" (ὅςδ' ὄνῃσε, 343) the predicament and races toward them. The two then meet at close quarters, as in Book 8, and Diomedes now gets his revenge for Hektor's earlier insult, striking Hektor on the helmet and forcing him to retire, after which Diomedes delivers his own insulting boast (Σ bT 11.312, 362; Schadewaldt 1966, 61 n. 1). The stage again seems set for Diomedes to drive the Trojans in retreat, and he is again prevented. Whereas in Book 8, Paris disables Nestor's chariot, and with it Nestor, by striking his trace horse in the head with an arrow, Paris now disables Diomedes with an arrow to the foot (in a foreshadowing of Akhilleus' death). In Book 8, Odysseus races past Diomedes in headlong retreat, so that Diomedes "alone though he was" mingles among the *promakhoi* to rescue Nestor. In Book 11, by contrast, Odysseus shelters Diomedes, as the latter extracts the arrow, leaps on his chariot, and orders his charioteer to drive to the ships. Now it is Odysseus who is left alone to face the advancing Trojans, "since fear had seized all" the Argives (402). Odysseus then delivers a spirited *Selbstanrede* that affirms his bravery (404–10), thereby exonerating him from the charge of cowardice in Book 8.

42. Similar in Heitsch 2006, 24. Fenik (1968, 221) notes that "it is a regular stylistic feature [of the *Iliad*] for a situation to be carried to the extreme and the inevitable consequences then averted only by some intervention, either human or divine." Kelly (2006, 10–11) observes that the type of speech Diomedes gives is typical of such scenes and notes that Diomedes also uses it to call attention to his own heroic stature.

can become, in effect, frozen in time.⁴³ In the present case, one should also observe that the primary function of the speech is to provide information to the audience that indirectly explains why Diomedes invites Nestor to pilot his chariot (on which, see below). Such scenes, like those in which a character considers alternative courses of action, are often elaborated in some detail at the expense of a naturalistic representation of time.

As for the other two objections, I again suggest that Agamemnon's *epi- polesis* supplies important clues to our understanding of the passage. After praising Idomeneus and the Aiantes, Agamemnon next comes upon Nestor, who is arraying his troops for battle and instructing the charioteers not to fight alone in advance of the others, nor to give ground, since they will be weaker (*ἀλαπαδνότεροι*, 4.305) if they do. Agamemnon wishes that Nestor's limbs were as vigorous as his spirit, and his "strength were firm" (*βίη . . . ἔμπεδος εἴη*, 314), "but as it is, grievous old age wears you down. Would that some / other man had your years, and you were among the youths" (*ἀλλὰ σε γῆρας τείρει ὁμοίων ὥς ὄφελέν τις / ἀνδρῶν ἄλλος ἔχειν, σὺ δὲ κουροτέροισι μετεῖναι*, 315–16). Nestor echoes the sentiment, wishing he were the man he was when he killed Ereuthalion in battle, and then internalizes the contrast: just as he once was young, now old age accompanies him (*γῆρας ὁπάζει*, 321); even so, he will be among the horsemen, urging them on with counsel and harangues. We later see Nestor performing his self-assigned duties in Book 6.66–72.⁴⁴

We are, then, not surprised to find Nestor on board his chariot in the thick of battle in Book 8. That an old man should have old horses seems hardly surprising either; it also makes good sense, as it would amount to poor tactics on the part of the Akhaians' greatest tactician to waste a team of his best horses, or a *promakhos* as charioteer, on someone serving in a purely advisory capacity. Listeners familiar with the entire poem would also find their response conditioned by the funeral games of Book 23, where the slowness of Nestor's horses poses a further obstacle in a different sort of race.⁴⁵

Moreover, the predicament in which Nestor finds himself is precisely what he was on the field to advise his troops against: he is now far in front of the Akhaian forces and is, as he himself had warned in Book 4, dangerously exposed to attack.⁴⁶ Homer's remark that Diomedes "alone though he was, mixed among the *promakhoi*" (8.99) makes easy sense in this context if it is understood to describe his *relative position* on the battle field. He is not among the mass of fighting men, but driving far in advance of them to rescue Nestor and his charioteer—themselves both unwilling *promakhoi* at this

43. This can be related to a larger tendency, commonly referred to as "Zielinski's law," to depict parallel narrative threads sequentially, although the degree to which Homer in fact composes in this manner has become controversial; see Zielinski 1899–1901; Hellwig 1964; Whitman and Scodel 1981; Krischer 1971, 91–129; Rengakos 1995; Nünlist 1998; De Jong 2001, 589–90, 2004, xix–xx.

44. On Nestor's narrative function in the poem, see most recently Minchin 2005; Roisman 2005.

45. Conversely, Diomedes' remarks can be seen as preparing for the chariot race.

46. Nestor's concern with proper troop formation is also on display in Book 2.360–68 (on which, see below).

point—and to do battle with the rapidly approaching Hektor, who obviously qualifies as a *promakhos*, is here described fighting as such, and is also leading the charge of the Trojan army with other *promakhoi*, by definition, in the van. Finally, I suggest that the phrase is as much an invitation to visualize the scene a certain way as it is a description of a scene already imagined, and that the context adequately supports such a visualization.

DIOMEDES REPLACES STHENELOS WITH NESTOR
AS HIS CHARIOTEER

Diomedes then echoes Agamemnon's earlier remark that Nestor is no longer fit to serve as a spearman (βίη λέλυται, 8.103), along with the contrast between Nestor's age and the fighting youth (σε νέοι τείρουσι, 102) and Nestor's reply to Agamemnon in agreement (γῆρας ὀπάζει, 103). This does not, however, mean that Nestor is unfit to serve as charioteer; once more, those broadly familiar with the poem will be reminded not only of his self-described role in Book 4, marshaling chariots in battle, but also of the scene from Book 11 where he again assumes the role of charioteer as he escorts the wounded Makhaon to the ships (597–98), and later on in the same book where he easily raises a wine cup that “another man” would have labored even to move when it was full (636–37). Nestor remains vigorous in old age, and passages such as these from Book 11 will lessen any sense of incongruity in the audience when they hear that he serves as Diomedes' charioteer in Book 8. In the present scene, note also that it is Nestor, not Eurymedon, who races to cut away the trace horse with his sword.⁴⁷

That Paris is made to kill a trace horse is not unmotivated, as Kullmann argues, and it is difficult to see how its death would have consequences any less drastic for a team at full gallop than the member of a yoked pair, as Kirk claims.⁴⁸ (Nestor is implicitly haranguing the troops from a stationary chariot, like the chariot of Patroklos in the parallel scene of chariot wreck from Book 16.) On the other hand, Kullmann is probably right to argue that the *Aithiopsis* employs the motif of the trace horse because the chariot is still needed to convey Nestor from battle after his rescue.⁴⁹ In the *Iliad*, the chariot serves the identical purpose of conveying Sthenelos and Eurymedon to the ships, even if this is never explicitly described.⁵⁰

47. Cf. Kelly 2006, 10–11 with n. 50. Erbse, however, goes much too far when he claims (1993, 396): “Jetzt, da [Diomedes] den besten Wagenlenker des Achaierheeres [Nestor] neben sich hat, denkt er nicht an Flucht.” Diomedes has not been considering flight, and Nestor could scarcely be imagined to be as effective as, let alone better than, Sthenelos as charioteer, and his allegedly special skills as such are nowhere on display. Nevertheless, Erbse's intuition that the scene is designed to get Nestor in Diomedes' chariot is sound (on which, see below).

48. Kirk 1990, ad *Il.* 8.87–91: “The disabling of one of the regular, yoked pair would have had drastic and immediate consequences for those in the chariot; this aspect of Homeric warfare is suppressed, therefore, and the trace-horse introduced precisely because he can create a crisis but still be cut free, when a character needs to be threatened in a particular way as Nestor is here.”

49. This remains an inference, however, as neither Proklos nor Pindar mentions a trace horse.

50. Kelly (2006, 7 n. 27) shifts the emphasis to the chariot, observing that killing one of the yoked pair “would be entirely unparalleled in the *Iliad*, and create a major narrative difficulty. The chariot needs to be able to be driven back, either to the Greek camp or to Troy.”

It is true that Diomedes fails to mention the trace horse, but this objection ignores the function of the speech, which is to explain the narrative action to the *audience*: they already know the horse is dead, and nothing would be gained dramatically by reminding them of the fact. Of course, they also know that Nestor is old, but here Diomedes' words have an obvious dramatic function. Homer thus exploits the pathetic contrast between Nestor's old age and the youth of his assailants in order to integrate into the familiar some new information—the slow horses and feeble charioteer—that explains why Sthenelos will soon be dispatched to tend Nestor's chariot: once freed from the trace horse, the chariot team would still not be able to retreat quickly, and neither Nestor nor his driver is in a position to defend it or themselves against the attack of a *promakhos*.⁵¹ In other words, the pathos of the contrast gives Homer license to repeat familiar information that he can then use to mask his incorporation of new and salient material that *seems* simply like further embroidery on the theme of youth and old age (in this context note the homology between the claim that old age is Nestor's companion and that his squire is weak). His speech thus provides a narrative explanation for why Nestor takes over as Diomedes' charioteer. But, as we shall soon see, Homer also has thematic reasons for placing Nestor in the chariot that explain why he has taken the trouble to invent a practical one.

Finally, there is Nestor's golden shield and Diomedes' divinely made corselet.⁵² These are again prepared for by a pair of earlier scenes and they resonate significantly with larger themes in the epic. Diomedes had earlier exchanged his bronze armor for the golden armor of Glaukos in Book 6, so the audience has already come to associate him with special armor. It is then hard to understand the force of Kirk's—unargued—assertion that the corselet “clearly has nothing to do with the golden [armor] that he is supposed to have got from Glaukos at 6.235f., *contra* Arn/A.”⁵³ What matters, however, is not whether the audience identified Diomedes' corselet as the one he had received earlier from Glaukos—though, like the ancient scholiasts, many of its members surely did just that—but rather that they have already seen Diomedes acquire exceptional weaponry on two occasions in the preceding books, including the chariot team he is now using and about whose speed he boasts to Nestor in this very scene. As a result, they will not be surprised to find him wearing special armor here, and perhaps will not be overly curious as to exactly where it came from, especially as more interesting issues have a claim on their attention at the moment.

In Book 7, Nestor relates the story of how he came by his own suit of armor, when he killed Ereuthalion in a duel (note his earlier allusion to the story in the *epipoleis*). As it happens, Lykoorgos gave the armor to Ereuthalion, his

51. Note also that the earlier contrast between youth and old age acquires additional poignancy in the context of Nestor's plight in Book 8.

52. Fenik (1968, 222–23) also terms the account “inept,” but wrongly claims that the shield is not mentioned again. Homer alludes to the desirability of the shield at 14.9–11 (on which, see below, n. 55). The claim that the corselet was made by Hephaistos could well have been suggested by Memnon's armor in the *Aithiopsis*, but it more directly relates Diomedes to Akhilleus.

53. Kirk 1990, ad *Il.* 8.191–97.

squire (θεράποντι, 149), once he had become too old to fight.⁵⁴ Lykoorgos, for his part, had stripped the armor from Areithoos, whom he killed in an ambush, while Ares himself had given it to Areithoos (136–49). What makes the story of interest in the present context is its thematic significance: in Book 7, Nestor implies that in his prime he was more than a match for Hektor in order to shame the Akhaian *promakhoi* into facing Hektor in a duel. At the same time, the narrator is speaking through his character in a manner that foreshadows the death of Patroklos at the hands of Hektor, and of Hektor at the hands of Akhilleus.⁵⁵

Hektor corresponds to Ereuthalion as one killed while wearing armor taken from a slain warrior, in Hektor's case from Patroklos. This gives special point to Nestor's seemingly casual mention of Ereuthalion as the *therapon* of Lykoorgos, since Patroklos is also the *therapon* of Akhilleus. On the other hand, Hektor corresponds to Lykoorgos as one who kills another man in battle and then dons his armor. But if we combine the two scenarios, so that Nestor kills a man wearing armor that had been twice despoiled from a slain combatant and once passed down from an aged warrior to a young one—or from a different angle, given by a *promakhos* to his *therapon*—then the only other corresponding set of armor is Akhilleus' own: Peleus hands the armor down to Akhilleus, Akhilleus gives it in turn to Patroklos, his *therapon*, it is then despoiled from Patroklos by Hektor, and despoiled from Hektor by Akhilleus. Nestor thus becomes squarely aligned with Akhilleus.

These parallels give point to Nestor's remark that Ereuthalion was the greatest man there in stature and might (μήκιστον καὶ κάρτιστον, 155); and they give additional point and irony to the fact that in issuing his challenge to a duel, Hektor introduces the theme of the return of the corpse for burial. His remarks again foreshadow his own death at the hands of Akhilleus, and he goes on to lose the duel with Aias immediately following a scene of symbolic leave-taking from his wife and son in Book 6. Collectively, then, the duels that frame the first day of fighting symbolically reenact the cause of the war and foreshadow the death of Hektor and return of his corpse with which the poem concludes (the duel between Hektor and Aias can also be understood as echoing the funeral games, and specifically the duel between Diomedes and Aias, which Aias in turn loses).

These observations are immediately relevant to the scene from Book 8. Whereas Hektor here attempts to kill Nestor and despoil his “famous” armor, he eventually does kill Patroklos and puts on his far more famous armor. It would seem, then, that we have two Akhilleis in the chariot, or more evocatively, Akhilleus and his father.⁵⁶ Nestor thus corresponds to Peleus, whom Diomedes has just saved from certain death in a scene echoing the *Aithiopis*

54. The original meaning of “ritual substitute” is very close to the surface here, as he gives it to Ereuthalion who replaces him in battle. On the etymology of *therapon*, see van Brock 1959, and Nagy 1999, 33, 292–93.

55. Note that Thrasymedes is elsewhere said to have borrowed his father's shield (14.9–11; cf. Janko 1992, ad loc.), in another foreshadowing of Patroklos' borrowing of Akhilleus' armor as Nestor himself had suggested at Book 11.798. In this context, also note that Akhilleus kills a Trojan named Areithoos at 20.487.

56. Whitman 1958, 166–67.

tradition that Nestor was saved by his actual son Antilokhos. As we have already observed, Book 5 serves to establish Diomedes as a surrogate Akhilleus, while the *epipoleis* episode of Book 4 shows that he has no need to challenge authority and parental figures as Akhilleus does. It is thus thematically most appropriate that he rescue his “father” here (nor is it surprising that afterwards Nestor calls explicit attention to the father-son analogy as the basis of his authority in the Greek assembly that follows in Book 9). That the intertext supplied by the *Aithiopsis* thus significantly reinforces the *Iliad*’s own thematics lends further support to the Neoanalytic position that Homer and his audience were familiar with the story of Nestor’s rescue by Antilokhos.⁵⁷

The analogy also helps illuminate Hektor’s claim that Hephaistos made the corselet of Diomedes: the most important suits of armor made by the god belong to Akhilleus, with whom Diomedes is already closely associated.⁵⁸ The suit presented by the gods to Peleus, and later handed down to Akhilleus, is implicitly made by Hephaistos, but the suit that Hephaistos forges in the actual narrative of the *Iliad* is much more directly associated with the god and is only worn by Akhilleus in the poem. The scene thus provides Hektor with an ironic act of revenge on the surrogate of his future killer and it contrasts markedly with the scene of his own death: in Book 8, he pursues Diomedes, who must be persuaded to flee and does so unwillingly, and both are in chariots; in Book 22, Akhilleus races toward Hektor, who loses his nerve, flees, is pursued on foot, and must be persuaded to take his stand and fight.

THE—CENTRAL—ISSUE OF MOTIVATION

In sum, none of the criticisms leveled by Kirk against the scene stand up under scrutiny. Instead, it has been carefully prepared for, in particular by the *epipoleis* of Book 4. It remains to address the issue of motivation, which has been disparaged not only by Kirk, but by virtually all previous scholars on the passage.

The first of Homer’s motivations for incorporating the scene of rescue is the practical consequence of having Zeus impose arbitrary defeat on the Akhaian army. For the narrative of that defeat to have the minimum dimensions, along with the dramatic force, demanded by its significance, the Akhaians must stage a counteroffensive; yet continuing to fight in the face of direct opposition by Zeus would have seemed as foolhardy as it would have been impious. Homer solves this problem by adapting a scene from the *Aithiopsis* that can serve to exonerate Diomedes for his failure to retreat in

57. A further analogy can be drawn between Akhilleus joining battle with Memnon to avenge the death of Antilokhos despite the warnings of Thetis, and Diomedes joining battle with Hektor to prevent the death of Antilokhos’ father, Nestor, despite the warnings of Zeus (I use the word “avenge” here without endorsing the Neoanalytic “vengeance theory,” on which see Burgess 1997). The analogy, in turn, further strengthens the relationship between Diomedes and Akhilleus in this scene.

58. Cf. Schoeck 1961, 76. Note, however, that the armor Nestor strips from Ereuthalion was, implicitly, made by Hephaistos since a god, Ares, gave it to Areithoos.

flagrant opposition to the will of Zeus: Diomedes does so because he is intent on rescuing an old man from certain death. Zeus thus does not oppose him until he begins to rout the Trojans.

Zeus can thus be seen as implicitly sanctioning the rescue, and even the attack on Hektor. Moreover, the impetuosity Diomedes displayed throughout his *aristeia* in Book 5 prepares the audience for the fact that he does not stop with rescuing Nestor, but goes on to press the attack against the Trojan forces. After wounding two other gods, Aphrodite and Ares, in the course of his *aristeia*, Diomedes even tries to oppose Apollo when the god shields the wounded Aineias from Diomedes' continued attack. When Apollo finally warns him to yield he does so, but only reluctantly. So too, in Book 8, Diomedes naturally advances on the charging Hektor rather than retreat from him, and he withdraws from battle only with the greatest reluctance when Zeus again intervenes with his lightning bolt. We thus have a theological explanation for Homer's appropriation of Nestor's chariot wreck, a psychological explanation for why Diomedes does not stop with the rescue but proceeds to attack Hektor,⁵⁹ and a structural explanation for the counter-attack that Diomedes initiates.⁶⁰ The question remains, however, whether Diomedes does in fact improvise the venture against Hektor out of an intended rescue.⁶¹

As I have already suggested, the chariot wreck and subsequent attack on Hektor are largely responsible for whatever dimensions the narrative has. To this dilating strategy we may add the death of Hektor's charioteer, which not only further prolongs the narrative, but also gives Diomedes a minor success that contrasts pointedly with his subsequent Zeus-imposed retreat, and thus serves to heighten the frustrated outrage that the retreat is meant to provoke (see below). That his success is also *structurally* necessary can be assessed by imagining the narrative without it: when Diomedes takes Nestor on board his chariot, we are to imagine that the narrative "clock" has been reactivated and that Hektor is now rapidly closing in on them. So far from being improvised out of the rescue, or weakly visualized, an encounter with Hektor is physically inevitable, just as the character of Diomedes has been drawn in such a way as to make his retreat without a struggle unthinkable. Indeed, his earlier harangue of Odysseus presents an encounter with Hektor in just these terms (8.96): "Stay! so we may repulse this wild man from the old one!" The death of Hektor's charioteer, then, provides Dio-

59. That is, the scene can be explained in terms of the psychological perspective of Diomedes, though Homer's compositional practice is the reverse of this: he adapts the scene of rescue in order to make possible the subsequent venture and its consequences.

60. Erbse (1993, 396) argues that the scene provides formal closure on the exploits of Diomedes that begin in Book 5. This overlooks nearly two intervening books, including an encounter between Diomedes and Glaukos in which Diomedes declines to fight that could be said to provide sufficient closure. This tack also leads directly to a depreciation of Nestor's significance in the scene (*ibid.*, 397): "Nestor selbst ist kaum mehr als eine Hilfsfigur, wichtig eigentlich nur durch seine unvergleichliche Kunst im Lenken des Streitwagens" (on his alleged "incomparable skill" as a charioteer, see above, n. 47). But, even if one accepts his findings, Erbse only offers a second, structural, explanation for why we have a scene involving Diomedes—he does not account for why we have this particular scene, and, to repeat an earlier point, his findings do not in themselves constitute evidence that the scene is well executed.

61. See also Heitsch 2005, 439; 2006, 25; rebutted by Kelly 2006, 9.

medes with a further opportunity to display his natural impetuosity and so invite the divine intervention that alone could cause him to flee to the ships. But, more importantly, it provides the temporal and physical space in which Zeus can thunder, Nestor counsel flight, Diomedes protest, Nestor rebut and then turn a chariot with “cowering” horses one hundred eighty degrees and bring them to a full gallop—all without Hektor being able to close the gap and attack them from behind. In other words, it creates the narrative space into which Homer can deploy an *akhos*-theme.

THE “AKHOS-THEME”

Nestor’s chariot wreck is thus well motivated in narrative terms, but that is by no means all Homer accomplishes by incorporating it into his narrative. In fact, we can arrive at a further motivation by observing the scene’s effect: it allows Homer to remove Sthenelos from Diomedes’ chariot and place Nestor in it. Or, more precisely, since Sthenelos promptly fades from view, it follows that Homer has deployed the scene in order to provide a plausible excuse for relocating Nestor to Diomedes’ chariot.

The key, as I have suggested, is provided by the *akhos*-theme that unfolds once Nestor is on board. In an earlier study, I sought to abstract the typical features of this theme from various scenes in which characters experience *akhos*.⁶² Here, I would like to reexamine the theme in terms of its sequential deployment, and the implications of this for the interpretation of Book 8.

In Homer, *akhos* regularly refers to mental anguish over loss, either of a *philos* (friend) or of *time* (relative status). There is no inherent reason why the meaning of the word is so restricted; the etymology is uncertain, but one generally assumes a connection with **agis*, with a primary meaning of “fear.”⁶³ In at least one of the sixty-three occurrences of the noun form in Homer, *akhos* does seem to refer to anguish over one’s own personal safety.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes use the word to describe physical anguish.⁶⁵ Homeric usage can thus be understood as a thematically and ideologically motivated restriction of meaning.

The *akhos*-theme originates in an *eris* (competitive struggle) for *time*. That struggle may occur between members of the same community or with enemy combatants.⁶⁶ The winner regularly asserts his enhanced *time* with a

62. Cook 2003.

63. Chantraine 1968–80; Frisk 1954–73; von Kamptz 1982.

64. *Il.* 20.282; cf. 13.86, 417; and *Od.* 12.250, 22.188.

65. LSJ cite Pind. *Pyth.* 3.50; Aesch. *Cho.* 586, *Pers.* 573; Soph. *Trach.* 1035; Ar. *Ran.* 1353, 1531. The entry in LSJ is somewhat misleading, as classical authors, e.g., Soph. *Aj.* 153, do use the word in the sense of “indignant grief” over lost *time*. In general, however, *akhos* is used much more broadly than in Homer to designate various types of distress, both mental and physical (for Homeric usage, see Voigt 1955, s.v. *ἄχος*; Cook 2003).

66. Further in Cook 2003. Konstan’s (2005, 2006, esp. 244–58; cf. also 2003) nuanced and anthropologically informed study of the emotions in classical Greek literature suggests that “indignation” is more central to the meaning of *akhos* in such contexts than is generally recognized (an important further exception is Cairns [2003, 21–22; cf. also 29–30], who points out that Homeric “*achos*, in so far as it denotes a painful emotional response to an insult or affront to one’s *timē*, can refer to the emotion of anger itself,” citing Diomedes’ reply to Nestor at *Il.* 8.147). In other words, *akhos* represents the anguish one feels at deprivation, and can be directed toward both the individual who deprives one of a thing and the thing of which one is deprived.

boastful speech, or the loser may imagine him doing so. The person who loses *time* experiences *akhos*, or “indignant grief,” and must decide between attempting to preserve or recover his status, or abandoning the struggle and accepting the loss, if only temporarily. One or more counselor figures then offers prudent advice, which the hero may or may not follow.

Two deployments of the theme structure the first episode of the poem: when Agamemnon learns that he must lose *time* and a *philos*—his war prize Khruseis—as a consequence of dishonoring the priest Khruses, he experiences *akhos* (ἀχλύμενος) as his mind fills up with rage so that it is completely black (μένεος δὲ μέγα φρένες ἀμφὶ μέλαινα / πίμπλαντ’, 1.103–4). He then responds by threatening (ἀπειλήσω, 181, echoing 161; cf. 8.150) to deprive Akhilleus of his own prize, Briseis, and declares that he will do so “so that . . . another will shrink / from saying he is my equal, and set himself up as my like” (186–87). His words thus correspond to a victor’s boast delivered before the fact.

Now it is Akhilleus who feels *akhos* (188) over his own prospective loss of *time* and a *philos* (cf. 171), and he deliberates whether to kill Agamemnon on the spot or to restrain his own *thumos* (192; cf. 8.169). Athene intervenes and persuades Akhilleus not to kill Agamemnon, but instead to withdraw from battle in the expectation that Agamemnon will eventually be forced to offer restitution. Nestor then attempts to restrain both Agamemnon and Akhilleus, arguing that Agamemnon should not take Akhilleus’ prize and Akhilleus should not seek to “engage in competitive strife” (ἐριζέμεναι, 277; cf. 8) with Agamemnon. Agamemnon agrees that everything Nestor says is proper (κατὰ μοῖραν)—as does Diomedes in Book 8 (1.286 = 8.147)—but he takes Briseis anyway, with consequences that are now at last unfolding in Book 8.

Homer thus uses the opening scene of the poem to establish the semantics and thematics of *akhos* for his audience. It follows that this specialized meaning of *akhos* is highly significant for the interpretation of the poem. It also follows that in an eristic and status-driven society such as Homer’s, *akhos* over lost *time* is among the direst emotions one could experience. Homer thus structures the climactic scene of Akhaian defeat in Book 8 around the *akhos* of Diomedes, who in turn serves as the mouthpiece of Akhaian *akhos* over their loss of *time* in an ignominious defeat by a vastly inferior force. But, the emotional intensity evoked by *akhos* is not the only reason Homer deploys the theme, for it is in this very scene that the Akhaians acquire their thematic identity as “men of indignant grief,” and Akhilleus his own as one who causes his *laos* to suffer *akhos* through an act of divine intervention (it is only after the Akhaians become men of *akhos* that Akhilleus’ withdrawal from fighting becomes a source of further grief).⁶⁷ Thus, by a supreme irony, the *akhos* of Akhilleus over his loss of *time* at the hands of Agamemnon is directly responsible for the *akhos* of his surrogate, Diomedes, over his own loss of *time* and Hektor’s prospective boasting.

Still more important for the purpose at hand, Homer uses the opening scene of the poem to introduce a recurring narrative pattern in which the

67. For the etymology of Akhilleus’ name, see esp. Nagy 1994 and Nikolaev 2007, with further bibliography; cf. also Cook 2003, 194 with n. 67.

feelings associated with *akhos* are so intensely negative that one who suffers it may fail to heed the advice from a counselor figure, or figures, even though he recognizes and acknowledges that he should. In each of the first four iterations of the theme, Nestor plays the role of a second, tactically oriented counselor, following one who appeals to emotion. Thus, in Book 1, Athene counsels restraint to Akhilleus, after which he rebukes Agamemnon, and Nestor then attempts to restrain them both by explaining why they must not quarrel and the likely consequences of doing so. In Book 2, Athene again counsels Odysseus in a third iteration of the theme, after which he uses an ostensible address to Agamemnon to rally the troops, and Nestor again offers tactical advice. Akhilleus' rebuke of Agamemnon in Book 1 is in turn displaced onto Thersites. In Book 9, when Agamemnon's *akhos* over the army's defeat causes him to propose sailing for home, Diomedes simultaneously rebukes him *and* rallies the troops, after which Nestor again offers tactical advice.⁶⁸

In Book 8, there is obviously no place for an address to Agamemnon, as he has already fled to the ships. More significant, Athene's advisory function in Books 1 and 2 has been displaced onto Zeus, who warns Diomedes with his thunderbolt against pressing the attack, even though Athene had sought, and received, permission to offer just this sort of advice at the beginning of the book. Although that earlier scene may be designed to generate narrative suspense, there are several reasons why the goddess cannot reprise her earlier role here.⁶⁹ The goddess does advise Akhilleus to withdraw from fighting in his private quarrel with Agamemnon in Book 1, but it would be a very different thing, and completely out of character, for the chief divine champion of the Akhaians on the battlefield to urge Diomedes to flee to the ships. The incongruity here would be further heightened by her earlier support of Diomedes when he attacks Ares and Aphrodite in Book 5, and her own subsequent disobedience of Zeus' prohibition against divine interference in Book 8, which in fact closely mirror Diomedes' own overstepping in the episode. More importantly, Book 5 clearly establishes him as Athene's protégé, so that if she had commanded him to retreat he would have had little choice but to obey (on his deference to authority, see below). Having Zeus do so with his thunderbolt is thus at once more grandiose and more suspenseful. In the event, Diomedes does withdraw from battle, just as Akhilleus had done, and like Akhilleus he ultimately exacts his revenge after accepting a temporary loss of *time*, in Diomedes' case during a rematch in Book 11 in which he very nearly kills Hektor.

The defeat of the Akhaian army in Book 8 thus meets the essential criteria of an *akhos*-theme: in suffering a major loss and fleeing to the ships, the Akhaians lose *time* to Hektor and the Trojan army. Yet the Trojans do

68. On the assembly scenes of Books 1, 2, and 9, see Lohmann 1970, 173–78. Note that whereas Nestor seeks to prevent Akhilleus from becoming disaffected in Book 1, his strategy in Book 2 is to expose the disaffected soldiers, and in Book 9 he attempts to secure the return of the disaffected Akhilleus to the fighting.

69. Note also that in Homer the gods only appear to mortals who are inactive, not those engaged in fighting.

not win because of their own battle prowess, but through the direct intervention of Zeus. The Akhaians, and Homer's pro-Greek audience, would have every reason to feel indignant over their defeat, in short, to feel *akhos* over an unjustified loss of *time*. Homer then particularizes this theme through the experience of their best offensive fighter, Diomedes, who would have most acutely felt *akhos* over suffering defeat by an inferior army, especially after his successes on the previous day of fighting. As in Books 1 and 2, his impulse is to retaliate, and once more, Nestor offers the correct tactical advice at this critical juncture. The suspense over whether Diomedes will heed that advice, introduced by the earlier deployments of the *akhos*-theme, is reinforced by the motif of Zeus' three thunderings. Elsewhere, when a hero attempts something three times, he regularly fails on the fourth, often dying as a consequence.⁷⁰ Here it is the deliberation itself that fails, so that Diomedes ultimately returns to camp, however reluctantly.

The *akhos*-theme thus explains why Homer has adapted a scene from the *Aithiopsis* in his narrative of Akhaian defeat in Book 8. He does so in order to place Nestor in Diomedes' chariot, because it is Nestor's narrative role to counsel restraint when *akhos* causes Diomedes to respond impulsively.⁷¹ Not only does Diomedes save Nestor's life, but from the perspective won by our understanding of the *akhos*-theme it emerges that Nestor returns the favor by saving Diomedes' own life as well.

In short, just as the opening scene of the poem serves multiple programmatic functions, Homer has been preparing from the start to structure the climactic scene of Trojan triumph that in Book 8 finally fulfills Zeus' promise to Thetis around a pair of contrasting emotions with multiple ramifications: Hektor's giddiness at his unexpected triumph over the Greeks, his first of the war, and its converse in the indignation of the Akhaians bordering on moral outrage at their loss. In fact, Hektor's own giddiness helps exacerbate the indignation that Diomedes here embodies, and that in turn serves to model the emotional response of the poem's audience. Homer makes the focus of this frustrated anger the person most responsible for Greek success on the previous day, and thus the person least capable of tolerating Hektor's boast and the most outraged by it. Homer further emphasizes those feelings by making the defeat seem as arbitrary as possible. In short, everything about the narrative of Book 8 has been subordinated to the task of heightening the drama of this emotional climax, characterized as *akhos*, that Nestor and Nestor alone may be able to control. Once again, we see how the struggle for honor and a drama over lost status are at the emotional and thematic core of the *Iliad*: in this way, Book 8 and the *akhos* of Diomedes provide a far deeper introduction to the embassy to Akhilleus than simply introducing the circumstances that require it. Herein, I suggest, lies the true "importance" of *Iliad* 8.

70. For example, in Book 5, Diomedes rushes at Aineias three times, and on the fourth is repulsed by Apollo; and in Book 16, Patroklos storms the walls of Troy three times, and on the fourth is disarmed by Apollo and killed by Euphorbos and Hektor.

71. Frame's (1978) argument that Nestor's traditional function in myth is to help achieve a safe *nostos* is also relevant in the present context.

It is also worth noting that, at this point in the narrative, Sthenelos has been twice disqualified from playing the role of a restraining figure. After Agamemnon encounters Odysseus in the *epipoleis*, he next finds Diomedes standing inactive in his chariot along with Sthenelos (4.365–67). Agamemnon rebukes Diomedes by reminding him of the heroism of his father, Tydeus. Diomedes does not respond, “in deference toward the rebuke of the king, who was deserving of deference” (402), but Sthenelos declares that Agamemnon is speaking lies (405): “We claim that we are far better men than our fathers.” Whereas in metapoetic terms Homer can be seen as asserting the greatness of the *Iliad* at the expense of the Seven Against Thebes tradition, he simultaneously introduces Sthenelos to the poem as incapable of restraining *himself*, despite the example set by Diomedes. He will obviously be of little use restraining Diomedes in Book 8. For his part, Diomedes is introduced in pointed contrast not only to Sthenelos, but as importantly to Akhilleus, whose conflict with Agamemnon and rejection of his authority introduces both characters and the central themes of the epic. This contrast is so pointed, and Diomedes’ subsequent domination of the battlefield so striking, as to lead one Homeric scholar to declare that “Diomedes is Achilleus without the complications.”⁷²

In the large-scale fighting that follows in Book 5, Sthenelos’ volatility is again on display, but to far different effect. In the first major encounter of Diomedes’ *aristeia*, Sthenelos forgets his earlier bluster at Agamemnon when he sees the chariot of Aineias and Pandaros bearing down on them (5.243–50):

“Τυδεΐδῃ Διόμηδες, ἐμῷ κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ,
 ἄνδρ’ ὁρώ κρατερῷ ἐπὶ σοὶ μεμαῶτε μάχεσθαι,
 ἴν’ ἀπέλεθρον ἔχοντας· ὁ μὲν τόξων ἐὺ εἰδώς,
 Πάνδαρος, υἱὸς δ’ αὖτε Λυκάονος εὖ χεῖται εἶναι·
 Αἰνεΐας δ’ υἱὸς μὲν ἀμύμονος Ἀγχίσαιο
 εὖ χεῖται ἐκγεγάμεν, μήτηρ δέ οἱ ἔστ’ Ἀφροδίτη.
 ἀλλ’ ἄγε δὴ χαζώμεθ’ ἐφ’ ἵππων, μηδὲ μοι οὔτω
 θῶνε διὰ προμάχων, μή πως φίλον ἦτορ ὀλέσσης.”

245

250

“Son of Tydeus, Diomedes, dearest to my heart,
 I see two fierce warriors with measureless strength
 eager to fight you, the one well skilled with bows,
 Pandaros, who boasts he is the son of Lykaon,
 and the other, Aineias, who boasts he is born the son
 of blameless Ankhises, but his mother is Aphrodite.
 So then, come on, let us yield on our chariot—please don’t
 rage like this among the *promakhoi*, lest you lose your life.”

245

250

Diomedes responds angrily that it is not his birthright (γενναῖον, 253) to shirk or cower; he will go at them just as he is. In the event that he kills them both, Sthenelos is to stay their own chariot and make for the semi-divine horses of Aineias: “for if we should take these two, we would win a

72. Taplin 1992, 135; cf. Schoeck 1961, 76: “*Diomedes ist Achill ohne dessen letzte Vermessenheit*” (his emphasis).

fame that is noble" (εἰ τούτῳ κε λάβοιμεν, ἀροίμεθά κε κλέος ἐσθλόν, 273; cf. 8.191–92, 196).

We have already observed the parallel between Diomedes' seizure of Aineias' chariot team here and Hektor's attempted seizure of Diomedes' armor in Book 8. Later in Diomedes' *aristeia*, Athene forces Sthenelos to dismount so that she and Diomedes can go after Ares, the divine embodiment of a *promakhos*, just as Nestor is again made to replace Sthenelos in Book 8, whereupon he and Diomedes set out to fight Hektor, the greatest *promakhos* of the Trojans (Athene has been expressly prohibited by Zeus from providing physical aid in Book 8). But what is most significant in the present context is that both of Diomedes' charioteers, Sthenelos in Book 5, and Nestor in Book 8, fearfully urge Diomedes to retreat rather than face an advancing chariot bearing two Trojan *promakhoi*. Behind this parallel lies a crucial distinction, for Nestor declares that Diomedes should do so not because the combatants are formidable, but because Zeus himself has imposed it. Aside from raising again the question of whether Diomedes will heed Nestor's advice, the parallel passage shows quite clearly that Sthenelos would have been unable to persuade Diomedes.⁷³ The passage from Book 5 also demonstrates how sorely Diomedes himself will need restraint when faced with the prospect of fleeing Hektor.

To conclude: although we have been moving generally forward in the narrative in order to explain Homer's compositional strategy, we have been working in reverse of the actual decision-making process that gives us the sequence of events. From the beginning of the poem, Homer has been planning to structure the scene of Akhaian defeat that would fulfill Zeus' promise to Thetis as an *akhos*-theme, whose outcome has been rendered ambiguous by its earlier deployments. He thus makes the Akhaian defeat and loss of *time* seem as arbitrary as possible so as to rouse feelings of outraged indignation in Diomedes, who both embodies the *akhos* of the Akhaians and models the response of the external audience. The audience, like Nestor, and like Diomedes, is made to feel that Hektor has not earned the right to make the boast he delivers, a boast all the more galling for the extremes to which he goes in making it. In other words, Zeus' intervention in Book 8 is responsible for the *akhos*-theme, and Hektor's boasting speech is designed to exacerbate the emotions that accompany it, even as it provides essential characterization of Hektor and foreshadows his fate. Indeed, one could argue that Hektor's boast at the fleeing Diomedes explains why Homer incorporated the scene of Nestor's chariot wreck in the *Aithiopsis* into the narrative of Book 8. Nestor thus serves as an index of the magnitude of Diomedes' *akhos*: even in the face of sound advice, delivered by the most authoritative human character in the poem for offering it, Diomedes deliberates returning the attack, which requires further intervention by Zeus himself. In short, Homer has marshaled the considerable resources at his disposal, including his inherited traditions and narrative art, with the twin objectives of inspiring *akhos* in his audience and thereby heightening the emotional drama of the

73. A point already noted by the ancient scholiasts.

pivotal scene that leads to the embassy to Akhilleus in the next book. The scene from the *Aithiopsis* may be more poignant than the scene from the *Iliad*, but Homer has amply compensated for this by crafting a narrative that is every bit as well motivated and consequential, and arguably far more complex and subtle.

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